

A FRESH HOLIDAY:

SIX WEEKS AT A

Hydropathic Establishment

On the Rhine in 1868;

*HOW TO GET THERE—HOW TO RETURN; CHARGES,
AMUSEMENTS, WALKS, EXCURSIONS, &c.*

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IN these latter days, Hydropathy has recommended itself by the convincing test of personal experience, to a very large circle among the most intelligent classes in this country, not only as an active and efficient system of cure for many forms of disease, but also as a fine tonic and a bracing and delightful experience to those in the enjoyment of health. Nothing will be said in this pamphlet of the details of treatment, nor any further words in its praise; it is written for those who have experienced its improving and exhilarating influence on the whole constitution, mental and bodily, and who delight to pass some part of their leisure in visits of greater or less duration at the various handsome establishments now happily so numerous. Some of these might desire to add to their experience the more complete change in climate and diet which may be obtained by a residence at some similar institution in Germany, and to such it is hoped that the following particulars of a visit to Laubach may be interesting and useful.

Tourists, also, who have good sense enough to wish to see a district of country as it ought to be seen—that is, in detail, and not merely to sail down a river, or rush past scenery in a railway train—will find a short sojourn at the locality about to be described, a cheap and convenient

point de depart for inspecting the beauties of the Rhine Valley. Their meals will be good and regular, rooms airy, beds clean, and the week's bill only half what it is at the hotels.

An introduction to the pleasures of hydropathy may be made by baths, few or many according to taste, without additional charge—a luxury in a warm climate, and a very expensive one at hotels. Besides these advantages, an opportunity is afforded of mixing intimately with the society of the country, and of observing their manners under many aspects, which to the true traveller must always be an attraction.

Germany, it is well known, is the parent country of hydropathy, and the warmth and salubrity of the climate in summer are favourable elements towards its application and enjoyment; therefore, without further preface, we shall take our readers to the banks of the Rhine, leaving the “how to get there” till the end.

Two miles from the beautifully situated town of Coblenz, in a gap of the pretty hills which here border the Rhine, stands the “Kalt Wasser Heil Anstalt” of Laubbach.

Murray's description of Coblenz will do to give an idea of the locality:—

“No town on the Rhine surpasses Coblenz in the beauty of its situation; from whatever side you approach it, whether by land or water, it presents a beautiful picture. The views from the centre of the bridge of boats, or the new railway bridge; from the heights of Ehrenbreitstein or of Pfaffendorf, or the Chartreux, are all fine. The most interesting object in the vicinity on account of its towering and majestic appearance, for the glorious view of the junction of the Moselle and the Rhine, and of the course of the Rhine from Stolzerfels to Andernach, which it commands, and for the vast extent of its fortifications, is the rock and fortress of Ehrenbreitstein—‘Honour's broad stone,’ connected with Coblenz by the

bridge of boats. This splendid fortress was blown up by the French in 1799, but it is now no longer a ruin. Since 1814 the Prussians have spared no cost or pains in restoring it, and new works have ever since been added to it, and to the fortifications on the opposite side of the Rhine surrounding Coblenz, and great works are still in progress. These fortifications are capable of being converted into a fortified camp, capable of holding over 100,000 men, and yet are so strong that 5,000 men are sufficient to defend them. The magazines are capable of containing provisions for 8,000 men for ten years," &c.

All this, with much more, is included in the view from Laubbach, to which we will now suppose we are driving from Coblenz. A short drive it is (two miles), all along the banks of the Rhine, which here assume that picturesque and romantic character which has given the river its celebrity. Turning suddenly to the right, and continuing the drive up a short avenue, several handsome blocks of white buildings are brought into view, forming three sides of an irregular quadrangle, the intervening space planted with chestnut trees, and in the centre a fountain playing merrily in the sunshine. The carriage draws up at the main door, and the visitors have arrived at Laubbach. Probably it is the superintendent who greets you, and the first necessity will arise for

Language.—No difficulty will be experienced on this point, as he speaks English—as do also the chief waiter and the doctor—to whom you will now be introduced as Dr. —, and after a short interview with him, the first things asked for will be

Rooms—Charges.—Rooms are let at different rates per week, according to size and furnishing. There is a considerable variety in these respects, and from a large number, to which the superintendent now conducts you, you may select according to your taste and your pocket.

The furniture in the cheapest class of rooms consists of bed, wardrobe, chest of drawers, two cane-bottomed chairs,

and an easy chair, with a small table, leaving not much space to spare. That of the highest class is in silk damask, and comprises both the furniture of sitting-room and bedroom, as is so common on the Continent. They are large rooms, with ottoman, handsome mirrors, and other elegancies. Between these two extremes there are many intermediate varieties; but, whatever your selection may be, cleanliness may be depended upon. The charge per week for the class first named is 15s. per week, and for the highest class, about 48s. per week. For diet, baths, advice, attendance, all are on a par, and share every other part of the establishment in common, at the charge of about 15s. per week, so that the charges to visitors may be stated as varying from 30s. to 63s. per week. The only difference between one and the other being the class of room they choose to occupy.

The "Speze Saal," or dining-room, is on the ground floor of the handsome building on the right, looking to the river, and is a very fine hall furnished in crimson plush. In the building on the opposite side of the court or square is another room equally large, used as a conversation and promenade room, and having a reading-room at one end and a billiard-room at the other. The ball-room occupies the ground floor of another building at right angles to the first named, and the baths are in the other two blocks, which stand at no particular angle.

The institution is the property of a joint-stock company, and has accommodation for a large number of visitors.

Baths.—The baths are on the ground floor, those for ladies in one building, and those for gentlemen in one altogether separate, exclusive of those baths which are administered in the private rooms, and as this establishment hoists on its flag "Cold Water," so it uses cold water exclusively. There are no hot baths, steam, vapour, or Turkish baths.* The warm

* Hot baths have been added since this was written—see appendix.

sun supplies all the needful heat. There are many sorts of douches, spray, and wave baths, &c. Sitz baths, and the cold-water pack, now so well known, are freely used. Drinking cold water must also be liberally indulged in, and the water is of such delicious coolness and sweetness as to make this very easy, not to say agreeable. Early rising, regular hours for meals, pure air, and exercise, in combination with the above, constitute the curative apparatus. And mention of these naturally brings us to

Diet.—Breakfast is on the table at 8 o'clock A.M., at which hour it is expected that as many will sit down as can do so, but it remains on the table till nearly 10 o'clock for those who are later.

It consists of a sort of curds much used by the German families at breakfast, called "Sour Milch," mixed with brown bread crumbs, and powdered white sugar, forming a sort of curious mess, not disagreeable, but, like oysters, having a smack of its own. Rolls and sweet milk, with a boiled egg or two, complete the simple repast. These latter (the eggs) are charged extra 1d. each, and any other additions, such as coffee, fancy bread, &c., are also charged. The establishment only allows the sour milch, and bread and milk, and those who adhere to this will find no lack, but anything else will be supplied on demand.

Dinner is served at one o'clock, and forms quite the event of the day. It consists of four or five courses, from any two of which a satisfactory meal may be made, and leaves nothing to be desired on the score of *cuisine*, except, perhaps, a slice of good English roast meat or mutton, the Germans having apparently lost the art of roasting meat, if they ever had it. Epicures may leave the Germans to eat their own roasts, dining very well on the smaller dishes, which are very varied, generally good, and sometimes asserting their superiority over British cookery as markedly as

the roasts fall short of it. Dessert and fruits bring the repast to a close. The bill of fare is changed every day, and considering the variety produced, the cook's brains must be on the rack now and then. Only water is drunk, as a rule, but exceptions are allowed in favour of wine, and a capital bottle of light hock or Moselle can be had, charged extra, of course.

Supper is served at 7 o'clock, and you are again introduced to your friend of the morning, the "Sour Milch," after which, baked apples, or boiled prunes, with bread and milk (generally warm from the cow), are served. Turn into bed at from 10 to 11. As the enjoyment of a good meal depends a good deal on the company at table, and since the amenity of the whole stay may be influenced by the

Society, it may be well to give an idea of what this will probably be. In Germany it is as much a necessary of life to the natives to visit a bath for a few weeks as it is for the Glasgow folk to go to the "Saut Watter," and they go for much the same reason, not because they are unwell, but simply for a bracing-up, a breath of fresh air and change. The company is consequently of a lively sort, many being only bent on spending their holidays in a wholesome and rational manner. The frequency of titles in Germany is well known, and you are almost sure to number among the company two or three barons and as many countesses.

There are sure to be agreeable people, well informed, well bred, and speaking probably several languages, always French, and often English. But, indeed, the Germans as a people are characterized by a softness of manner, and a natural good-nature, which is peculiarly refreshing. The pushing and driving, so much the rule in our sterner land, are for a time forgotten, and the wearied, anxious-minded Briton has a fine example set him how to take things easy and interest himself in simple pleasures.

May I here enter my experience as to the relative politeness of the French and Germans, and accord the palm to the latter? The politeness of the German is almost as elegant as that of the Frenchman, it is unobtrusive and unaffected, and on trial will be always found sincere, while his French neighbour uses *his politeness* more as he uses his best clothes, to reflect credit on himself, and on the least trial of its worth natural selfishness will become more prominent.

Hospitality is very freely accorded to strangers, and one or two introductions will soon admit you to a sufficiently large circle.

Amusements.—These are of course very likely to be only according to what each chooses to find amusement in—some find it in nothing, others in anything and everything.

There is a billiard-table and a bowling-alley; gymnastic apparatus, boxing-gloves, and foils are available; and time may be sometimes pleasantly wiled away over cards, dominoes, or chess. But exercise in the shape of frequent

Walks is prescribed, and numerous good roads branch away in different directions. Good walkers will also find ample exercise on the neighbouring hills, which afford views equal in beauty to almost any on the Rhine, while foot-paths innumerable through the woods will tempt them to stray into the sweet solitude of nature. Perchance a wild boar may startle by its grunt, or appal by its appearance, but this will only be an adventure, and there is *no fear but that you will come safe off*.

I extract from my diary as follows, date April 29th:—

“Walked up to-day to an eminence amongst the hills, which I had several times tried to reach before, and oh! what a lovely day, and what a prospect. The air was balmy, and so strongly perfumed by blossoms, and the budding of young trees, that it was exactly like inhaling eau de Cologne. Thousands of insects were busy, buzzing, flying, crawling,

and some sorts tumbling spasmodically head over heels, as if this was their sole *raison d'être*, and I suppose it was, and they were doing well what had been appointed them to do. Locusts and beetles of all kinds of brilliant colours flashed through the air, and dropped suddenly on the ground, then rose again as you approached, displaying all their coloured wings and coats. Wasps, bees, and innumerable butterflies constantly sung through the air, and two-inch long dragonflies, with wings like glass glittering, varied the flying squadron. On all this life the warm sun beats, and the singing of numerous birds soars to the clouds, and larks sing higher up in the blue expanse. Far beneath sweeps the noble Rhine, here divided into two by a leaf-shaped island (on which is a large seminary, principally attended by English). Farther on, the river, its two forks united, sweeps below the bridge at Coblenz, and the town on its banks, and the fortifications up the hills, gleam white in the sun.

"Looking the other way, half a dozen hoary old ruins of castles are in view, crowning as many bold summits, nearly all with little white villages nestling at their feet.

"On my way back I cull a variety of specimens of wild flora, new to me, not as a bouquet, for I object to pulling bouquets of wild flowers, which wither before you have them home, and only fret you out of taste with what looked so lovely in its native wild. Also pinned a considerable number of the pretty insects."

Another walk: "I have just ascended the hill of Kukkopf, the highest elevation here. It is an hour's walking from bottom to top. The view is so extensive as to embrace hundreds of miles of the broad face of Europe.

"The Rhine and the Moselle may be traced in many a devious winding and turning far away in the distant horizon. The sun does not shine where I stand, but he sheds his beams in golden patches on the landscape. I see

far away a lake in the top of a cup-shaped mountain, and I see the waters shine, but not a stir in the grand solitude there.

"I am up among the hardy black firs and mountain pines, far above the sweet woods I have so often roamed in."

Another fine stroll is that to Ober-Lahnstein. Half an hour's walk along the highroad which borders the river brings you to a very small village, where there are boats, one of which will ferry you over to Ober-Lahnstein for a penny or twopence.

Ober-Lahnstein is a very nice sample of the villages which are so numerous on the banks of the Rhine, and an hour will be very well spent here. The air is peculiarly sweet and bracing in the evening. The principal "object of interest" is Lahneck Castle, on a high rocky summit at the junction of the River Lahn with the Rhine. This castle is owned or tenanted by an Irishman who is very happy to see his countrymen. It commands a fine view, and is itself a most striking and picturesque object in the landscape.

There are concerts (free) in the open square within the Casino at Coblenz every Wednesday, and this will induce the visitor to Laubach to walk up occasionally to the town, a very agreeable walk, and passing partly through nicely laid-out ornamental shrubberies on the banks of the Rhine.

There are also fetes, &c., and to the stranger many of the Continental ways of doing things will be interesting. I extract from my diary, under date May 3rd, as follows:—

"Was up at Coblenz last night to see a torchlight procession in honour of a bishop. All the guild of the town walked through the streets in a double row, with coloured and particoloured lamps of paper of all shapes and devices hung on yardsticks. My first view of the affair was looking down a narrow street with high buildings on each side, when suddenly a blaze got up as if the street was on fire, and I

thought it was so for a moment; but on came this fiery procession, with bands of music, first thirty or forty with the coloured lamps and illuminated shields and devices, and then thirty or forty with flaming torches of tarred fir, swinging them to and fro; then thirty or forty more with the lamps of paper; then again thirty or forty torches, and so on alternating for half a mile, sprinkled with bands at proper intervals along the procession. Viewed as a whole, the effect was very good, but taken in detail it seemed a very whimsical and childlike affair. The whole then massed in a square opposite the bishop's residence, and performed what they called a serenade. The bands played some of Mendelssohn's fine airs, and then a choir of voices sang a hymn. As a bit of manners it was worth seeing."

I leave my readers to find more walks to their inclination. There is some beauty in the scenery at every point near and far, and I will now allude to the

EXCURSIONS,

Premising that I will only describe those I have myself taken, and that more may be found in Murray.

To Boppart, by rail and back in an afternoon, where there is another cold-water establishment called Marienberg. The building is old (1553), and was a convent for nuns, and one or two other things, before its conversion to its present purpose. There are long corridors, with doors all down each side, in which you may fancy there are nuns yet, for you cannot get rid of their presence mentally—a ghostly feeling pervades everything, and you are every now and then confronted by a picture—a fine thing in art or a daub, just as you think it—of a Madonna or a Crucifixion. The dining-room is the largest and handsomest in the house, as it ought to be for such a "jolly old crew as the monks of

old," who leave ample evidence that they were in the habit of living well, as tradition says of them. The roof is lofty and prettily corniced, and the flooring is of oak inlaid in a diamond pattern and highly polished.

Now as to the bathing accommodation—it is ample and varied, but, as in all cases where a house has been converted from one purpose to serve another which it was not built for, there is an unavoidable difficulty in planning, and the want of good arrangement is felt. The baths are a good deal scattered, and you go hither and thither after the guide, back and forward, before you have seen them all. There are douches of all weights, some I should not like to go under—shower, wave, spray baths, &c.; no hot baths, all cold. I particularly admired some baths of white porcelain, for plunging into; they were full of beautiful clear water of a pretty blue tint.

From top to bottom of the building a hoist has been constructed, and visitors sit in wheeled chairs and are let down to the baths (which are on the ground floor), then hoisted up and wheeled away to their rooms to dress.

We pass outside to a colonnade of an ancient but very shabby appearance, under the shade of which a group of Germans are having refreshments; we have a cup of coffee, which is not good. The outhouses are the same as those originally used by the convent, are quaint and funny in their appearance, and with very little fancy you might conjure up the abbot's sleek cob stabled there, or see it led out to meet him as he came out of the big arched gateway of the monastery.

This house is also the property of a company, and is under the management of Dr. ———; charges, &c., much the same as at Laubbach, but it is sadly wanting in the cheerfulness and convenience of that place.

Near this is the "Hill of Calvary" and "The Way of the

Cross," to which we now proceed, and find that this place has been a perfect hot-bed of Popish superstition, and it still is so. The hill is supposed to be emblematical of Calvary, and has a cross and a chapel on the top, with a figure of the Crucifixion, life size, over the doorway—date of the chapel, 1760. We ascend by an easy way, and descend a steep, zigzag path called the Way of the Cross, rough and slippery with sharp, loose stones (purposely, I supposed). The "way" is of some antiquity, as it is beset on each side with little square stones like small tombstones, some with dates as far back as 1500, and there may be some earlier, as there were many nearly obliterated.

The proper thing to do would have been to ascend by this steeper and rougher way to the top of the hill, instead of descending by it, but it would have been a "penance," and not having faith in the matter, we should have lost all the good of it.

It is traditionally asserted, I believe, that Our Saviour stopped seven times in going up the Hill of Calvary, borne down by His cross, and here at different stages in ascending we have seven shrines to worship at. Did I say seven? I count three times seven, so freely does superstition add another line to the fable that went before!

Some of these shrines are very old, and only consist of a rude stone cut into an arch with a receptacle for an image, and having the appearance of dog-houses, scarcely deep enough inwards to contain a dog comfortably; most are whitewashed within. But the new shrines are dainty affairs, finely done in carved stone, with a fancy iron grating, through which you are to gaze adoringly on a stucco alto-relievo of the scenes of the Ascent, the prominent parts, the swords, helmets, nails, &c., ticked out in gilding. These are quite new, are pretty numerous, and must have cost much to put them there, to serve no

purpose but for ignorant worship, showing that degraded minds are the fruits of Popery to-day as three hundred years ago.

There is another bath in this place, called the "Muhlbad"; it is smaller than Marienberg, and we did not visit it.

Boppart is a dirty, squalid-looking village, as might be expected from its Popish predilections and antecedents. Every now and then "a shrine" may be seen set up at the roadside for worship, and this is what the shrines are like—a coarsely cut stone, with a receptacle in which is a halfpenny doll for the Virgin Mary, and a halfpenny candle burning or smashed.

There is an ancient round tower, of great height, here, worth looking at, with neither a door nor a window from top to bottom.

The excursion to Ems or Bad-Ems may also be accomplished in an afternoon, but it is better to leave for this place in the forenoon and dine there.

It is a nice, short, pretty railway that takes you there from Coblenz along the right bank of the Rhine (the opposite from Laubbach), and then, changing at Ober-Lahnstein, along the banks of the Lahn to Ems. We went there—four Germans and the writer—without the usual English "Companion," and subsisted the entire day upon French for conversation—very hard work, but valuable.

"Spent the day in real German style. Made up my mind to let the Germans do what they liked, and this was it:—Scarcely out of the train, when they plan dinner (only twelve o'clock). One of them has an acquaintance who keeps a hotel, and he wishes to look him up; and after much inquiry and search, he is found established in a very decent house. We sit down; half-an-hour is goodnaturedly passed as a breathing time, in discussing what the dinner was to be, and this seems settled at last.

"The young host himself waits on us, and never was such a clean, tidy bustle made about five people. Time, however, is spent most prodigally. After sitting another half-hour, *plates* with clean napkins are set before us. Shortly after, the first of the viands, in the shape of a tureen of soup, is put down with an air and a flourish that says, 'That's the stuff! and that's the way to put it down! How good a dinner I want you to make!'

"Four or five courses follow in an unaccountable order which defies recollection, and sweets follow; and the affair has such a never-ending appearance, that I enter into the joke and don't care though they sit till ten at night. Bottles of selter wasser are the only drink indulged in, and due discussion must precede every new bottle introduced.

"At last we rise after having, as I suppose, wasted the best of the day; but the natives knew better: it has been broiling hot all this time, quite too hot for walking, and now coming on to the afternoon it is cooler, and we stroll out to see the place.

"Our young host accompanies us, and at a slow, easy pace we make for a wooded hill which seems to command a fine view. I feel impatient to reach the top, but we never get there.

"Having zigzagged up the pretty paths cut through the woods, the party call a halt at a restaurant about one fourth up the hill, and coffee, cigars, more selter wasser, and a long rest appear to suit our German ideas much better than any further exertion.

"Descending, we now visit the hot springs, have a glass of the water warm from Mother Earth's generous bosom, look in at the Kursaal or gambling saloon, purchase a specimen of glassware, &c. Then we sit a long time in the open air—soothed by the music of fine bands, and just dreaming away the time in a delicious laziness, the

fine air, the beautiful buildings, the green wooded hills, and the craggy summits, with the winding shining river, are all vivid to your mind's eye, though you know that you have closed your peepers for some time, and sunk into a conscious doze, while music floats a familiar strain into your delighted ear. At a signal, back to the hotel, get brushed, a slight refreshment, and quickly to the station. Now six o'clock. At Coblenz in an hour,—the scenery all the way enchanting. A machine from Coblenz to Laubbach—a real quiet-going German day."

The French laugh at the *bonhomie* of the Germans, and the simplicity of their tastes, but it is very delightful.

To the Abbey and Lake of Laach, and the Valley of the Brhol—a very fine excursion, on which a whole day must be spent.

Leave Coblenz at 11.5 A.M. for Andernach; arrive at 11.30. One of the oldest towns in Germany, and entirely consisting of picturesque streets, houses, towers, walls, &c., many being the work of the Romans, still standing and in occupation. Statistics avoided. Went to the Hotel Hakenbrach and hired a two-horse machine for the day for thirteen shillings and sixpence, and had a *beefsteak aux pommes* before starting. We drive up a rough road between two tall hedges, beset with images, crosses and shrines, and emerge on the higher plateau, an immense plain where the sun becomes oppressively hot; on and on, getting a little cooler, and the view something wonderful for extent. Miles of fields under crop; none in pasture; hills on hills planted to the top with vines; a town, a village, or a church set here and there in irregular beauty.

Came at last to Laach, less a village than a congeries of breweries, this being a great ale-brewing place; but it

is in such an out-of-the-world situation, miles from a possible customer, that you never would expect to find Ale! Ale! Pale Ale. The secret is, that underground there are vast cellars dug by the ancient Romans. They are more properly called mines, for they extend three miles under ground, and have shafts like coal pits, and they were hollowed out for the sake of a peculiar hard stone, of which there are no indications on the surface whatever. We have to look about for somebody here, as not a living being is visible on the surface, and, at length, amongst the buildings scattered in irregular groups all round, we find a small boy. Having made him aware that it was our wish to descend the pits, he made some kind of signal at the mouth of one of them, which, after a short time, brought to the surface an appropriate and interesting specimen of the underground population. As if his life were doomed to darkness in the bowels of the earth—he wears an aspect of awful gravity, and like a genius of the deep, seems to ask with his solemn eyes why we have called him from his abode. Nevertheless he is a sturdy fellow, in a blue cotton blouse, covering any amount of underclothing and coats, with his legs in leather boots up to the thigh, his head capped by a soiled night cap.

He lights two little oil lamps, and conducts us to a small opening in the earth where a flight of stairs commences; in we go, and down, down, down, in pitchy darkness except for the two flickering lights before us. A hundred steps down, and we come to a long wooden ladder nearly vertical, safely down which we are at the bottom. Utter darkness; not a thing to be seen, except, on looking up the shaft, a lozenge of the blue sky.

The immense apartments, pitchy dark, through which we now glide, are used as storehouses for the *Felsen bier*, which is the bitter beer or Bass of Germany. The

cold is intense, it is now freezing, and heaps of granules of ice lie in every corner, while icicles depend from the roof; yet above, on *terra firma*, the sun is blazing. I wrap my plaid round my shoulders, and my companion puts on a heavy great coat.

Here are puncheons innumerable as big as houses, set on stone trestles, and the cold is keeping the beer in splendid condition. We do the honours by drinking a large flagon, which tastes like iced nectar (whatever that may be).

The stone of these mines is of a basaltic character, like that of Staffa, in nearly regular octagonal and hexagonal pillars, vertical in the earth; and throughout the mines some of these pillars are left to support the roof. Wonderful energy in these old Romans: hands dug out these miles of mines—what could they not have accomplished with the aid of steam?

Emerging upwards into the daylight again, the transition from the intense cold to the heat is sufficient to throw us into a copious perspiration.

Then we visit the modern workings of the stone, which are wrought by a weary horse and an old old beam. Puny in comparison with the old diggings, and why, oh why, is there not a four-horse steam-engine to do the work decently? Bismark, look to this. The stone is now used for millstones, monumental tablets, corner stones, &c.; and half a dozen men and boys are dressing blocks at the pit mouth.

Leaving these subterranean worlds behind, we now drive on to the Laacher Zee, or Lake of Laach, which is a lovely little blue rippling lake, quite circular, and bordered all round by steep banks wooded down to the water's edge. Though small, it is 280 feet deep in the centre, and is thought to be the crater of an extinct volcano, which accounts for

its perfect roundness. Over the waters comes a strong smell of gas, and the shores are strewed with cinders and pumice-stone. There is a strong jet of carbonic acid gas at one part of the hills, sufficiently strong to kill dogs and rabbits, &c., and this is the old volcano's last gasp.

In this secluded spot, 666 feet above the Rhine, stands a fine monastery, the Abbey of Laach; built about the year 1093, it is in complete preservation, and is the only abbey of so great an age which I ever saw in full working order. The buildings are handsome and extensive, and its inmates number about two hundred, thirty-six being superior priests, and the rest noviciates or scholars.

Laacher Zee abounds in fine pike; we had therefore ordered that our dinner should include this fish, and when we returned to the nice little hotel we found it all right, fish fresh and excellent, and with a bottle of Moselle we were soon comfortable.

Into our carriage again and down the Valley of the Brhol, a great geological curiosity. Here geologists find a puzzle in the wonderful stone of which the whole valley is composed. It is difficult to account for its origin. It is called tuffstone, is soft looking, of the colour of peasemeal, and possesses the curious, but valuable, property of hardening in water. The Brhol is a winding, pretty little burn, and all around, its peasemeal territory is burrowed into holes like huge rabbit holes, and these are the *entrances* to vast subterranean works whence the tuffstone is dug out. As there was such a dreadful peasemeal dust in them we did not venture in. This material is made into bricks by simply pounding, wetting, and shaping it, and vast quantities of it are exported to Holland to help in constructing the celebrated dykes, in which it is very valuable, as the more the sea may wash it, the harder it makes it.

Arrive at Brhol on the Rhine, on which rest lazily at this

place half a dozen Dutch vessels loading or loaded with the tuffstone, a sketch for an artist. Too late for the steamer; drive along the Rhine to Andernach; by train to Coblenz—a very interesting day.

Excursion to the "Niederwald."—Went this excursion with a Dutch baron. Mons. le Baron T—— has a fine cheerful manner, speaks Dutch, French, and English alike well, and German and Italian fluently; he has travelled everywhere, and is full of information. I have been introduced to him some time ago, and as he is enthusiastic about the Scotch and Scotland, and knows our country well, we have been much together, and this is not the first nor the last excursion we have.

By rail from Coblenz to Bingen at 10:55, arrive at Bingen at 12:20, passing on our route through the loveliest, most charming, and romantic part of the Rhine scenery. I need not try to name the towns and castles we pass, nor the traditions that hang around them. The sun beats upon them all now, and they form to my mind a vision of dazzling splendour. At Bingen take a ferryboat down the rapids to the Castle of Rheinstein. The Rhine here falls 40 feet in about half a mile, and the current races, seethes, and bubbles.

We now find ourselves at the foot of Rheinstein Castle, looking up. What a height it now appears,—a castle remarkable even among the castles of the Rhine for elegance and picturesque effect—perched on a perpendicular rock, which comes right into the water. We land, and ascend a zigzag way cut in the rock, till high up we reach the castle gate.

There is an enormously heavy gate, half drawn up, its vertical bars continued downwards into sharp spikes shod with iron, ready to drop down on us *if we were "a foe."* Two enormous mastiffs bay and bark till the courts echo.

They are confined within iron railings, but they could be unloosened upon us in a moment *if we were a foe*.

We wait under the handsome stone arch, and like to the knights-errant of old, a beautiful young woman appears. It is the daughter of the schlossvogt, or castlekeeper, who does duty for her father, at the moment absent. She is a picture herself in her native grace and beauty, and adds the life that is awaiting to complete the romance that hangs around this charming castle of the olden time. Such towers! such air! what views, turret and wood and spire and tree, from the old hoary tower of feudal strength. We follow our pretty conductress through chapel and hall and chambers, all kept as in the olden time, and if the ghosts of ancient barons arose, here are their very chairs, their flagons, their boards, and their beds. Need I describe the "routh o' auld knicknackets" in great profusion here? Sir Walter has described them, let me pass them, and only allude to two interesting chairs, one of which is in the needlework of our gracious Queen, and the other in that of the present Queen of Prussia, both princesses at the time they executed these. The backs and seats are embroidered—that by our Queen has the Royal Arms quartered with something else, and that by the Queen of Prussia is another coat of arms. I think our Queen's is the most laboured, but that by the Queen of Prussia is the best execution. We are out on the topmost turret, from which hangs out what seemed from the Rhine to be a small birdcage, but is now seen to be a huge iron swinging grate hanging out on the end of a bar of iron, 20 or 25 feet long, and was intended to hold a beacon in the olden time.

With a farewell to our fair friend and her sister (very nice-looking too), we descend to where our boat lies waiting us on the banks of the Rhine, and cross in the teeth of the current to Assmannshausen, which gives its name to a very

celebrated wine. But we are now in the centre of the best wine districts of the Rhine, and the produce of all the vineyards around ranks high. We have a bottle of the famous Assmannshausen to dinner, and find it rich and dry, of a fine red colour.

Coming out, we are beset with women and donkeys to make the ascent of the Neiderwald, but we prefer our legs, and face up the hill. It is very steep, and very warm; but we soon get up, and come to level ground, under trees where stands the Jagd Schloss, or hunting castle of the Duke of Nassau.

From the Jagd Schloss to the magic bower, thence to an artificial castle, thence to the Tempel, an erection of an ornamental character intended as a shrine to Nature, and its situation is truly a spot which calls strongly on the heart to feel through Nature up to Nature's God; but as all these are alluded to or described in the guidebook, I pass them, interesting as they all are.

Still descending, now we pass through the vineyards of Rudesheim, and into Rudesheim, and here are old square castles and old round castles, wearing such a dreamy, forgotten look, with crucifixes and life-size figures of the apostles by the wayside, 500 to 1,000 years old. The evening sun glints upon them all, and the Rhine flows sweetly by them and through one of the sweetest of the pretty villages on its borders.

In close juxtaposition, and in mighty contrast, stands the smart railway station, and, most prosaic conclusion to a romantic day, we catch the six o'clock train, take our tickets to Ober-Lahnstein, and crossing the Rhine there, three-quarters of an hour's walk brings us home.

Excursion to San Goar, San Goarshausen, and the Switzer Thal.—Drove in a machine from Laubbach to Capellan, a railway station about a mile off. By rail to

San Goar, and there crossed the Rhine in a little screw steam ferryboat. How incongruous its little puffy movements were with the grand calm hills and the hoary ruins around.

O! so lovely looked the Rhine here! villages and towers spread along its bright banks, and stern frowning castles on its every crag, and the great rock of Lorlie (on the traditions regarding which the opera of *Lurline* is founded), conspicuous among them all, pushes its bold front into the stream, causing a dangerous whirlpool, but adding to the romance of the scene.

From San Goarshaussen we walk up the Switzer Thal, which is no more than a picturesque glen with a winding burn and high rocks, &c., such as we see dozens of in Scotland. When, however, we reach the utmost height up the hills, instead of a moor or a heath, stretching out before us, as we would find in Scotland, fine corn-fields spread their waving green all over a lovely alluvial plain, and busy husbandmen are making the best of a cool afternoon to dress their lands. Their agricultural instruments are miserable in the extreme; and the plough being drawn at a snail's pace by small bullocks, reminds one of the illustrations of Bible husbandry.

We take the way by a footpath, through the fields, to the Castle of Reichenberg. This is another specimen of the enormous castles so numerous here. It was built in 1280, is of great size, and in very good preservation—much of the original plastering and old painting on the walls being extant. The old plaster is very coarse and much mixed with hair, and the old paint is a red ochre, the only colour they had, I suppose, and checked with black lines. The tower is of enormous height, but we did not ascend it. Little idea can be given in words of this brave old place, but I thought deeply, as I sat in a retired corner and

viewed its enormous proportions, now useless. The ancient gardens are fresh and blooming; as Shakespeare says, "The air here smells wooingly."

We left by a beautiful road of two miles to San Goarshausen, and arriving there, had a capital supper in the gardens on the banks of the river, and, with a couple of bottles of the light wine of the country, we were "Fine, Tammy, fine!"

An echo being located here, it has its bugler of course, and from an adjacent bower he kept up a serenade to the rocks, which doubled and trebled his notes, and if rocks have feelings they seemed well pleased to be called upon, they answered so cheerily. Of course, we were called upon too, this entertainment being on our account, and did not grudge a few groschen.—Home by train.

The *Dancing Gardens* may afford amusement for the evening of some day on which you have not been an excursion. Those we visited are at the village of Gulz, on the opposite bank of the Moselle, and it forms a pretty and agreeable stroll of an afternoon to Moselberg, on the hither side of the Moselle, where a ferryboat will be found waiting to transfer you to Gulz, on the other side. The gardens will be found crowded with the people enjoying themselves in sundry innocent ways with all their heart. Hundreds of little tables are set out in the gardens under the trees, and eating and drinking will occupy the earlier hours of the evening. Everything seems "gay," none depressed, thought banished, yet you will witness no rudeness nor coarseness, but all good-humoured, soft-hearted people, as happy as children. The upper flat of several houses in the gardens are appropriated to dancing; stroll in, get upstairs, through the crowd, and enter the main room, crammed to suffocation. In the dancing there is little grace, but it is kept up with great spirit, and apparently thoroughly enjoyed in spite of the

heat and crush. The dances are mostly circular, and are much more varied in measure than with us.

The orchestra (playing in a corner in their shirt sleeves) played each dance a certain time, then stopped, and all who had been dancing remained standing till a collector went round the room and gathered the money for *that* dance. Then they might either resume dancing or not. The price for each dance was eight pfennings, or two thirds of a penny, and was paid by the male of the couple, many of whom kept the floor through several dances, paying each time. It was amusing, and the large sprinkling of military, which seems a feature of all Prussian society, gave the assembly a lively character.

Refreshments which we had here were very good, and merely to indicate the rates I shall mention what we had. Three of us—cold veal and bread each; two cups of milk warm from the cow; one bottle of Moselle wine (large) between us. Charge for all, 1s. 8d.

From this scene of simple enjoyment we walk out into the soft night air, and, recrossing the river, get home on foot—a sweet walk between the trees and over the hills. The glowworms lying by the roadside shine like little stars. There seems to be a nightingale in every bush, and as we pass along we whistle, and they answer out of the deep shade. They wait till we call, and again and again sweetly they respond. As they seem fond of this sort of communication with man, we keep it up, and every time we whistle, out of the dark bush comes a melodious, hearty carol in reply.

The bushes end, and out on the broad plateau of the hills; the baying of dogs breaks the stillness. These are nasty curs, a kind of dog I hate; a sharp-nosed sort, with bushy white hair standing out from their bodies. They make what might in vulgar parlance be called a "tremendous row"

on seeing strangers, or hearing a footstep, and in passing a farm this "row" generally began about a mile before you came to it, and continued for a mile after you had passed. Fortunately they are abject cowards.

Stolzenfels Castle.—The Rhine residence of the King of Prussia is in the near neighbourhood, and may afford a nice walk, and an interesting view for an afternoon. It has a fine commanding situation, and forms a picturesque and prominent feature in the landscape; but I did not think much of it as a comfortable residence on inspecting the interior. It is replete, however, with objects of beauty and interest, particularly the chapel, the walls of which are adorned with some very fine painting and tableaux. The furniture is in scarlet cloth with gold fittings; but everything looked as if it was not made to be used: for instance, though the beds were finely carved, and had embroidered satin counterpanes, they seemed small and scanty, and the grand chairs looked too low to sit upon comfortably.

"Then happy low, lie down,
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

All the excursions mentioned hitherto have been on the Rhine, but a variety may be obtained (though it takes a long time to exhaust the Rhine scenery, and the more it is examined the more traits of beauty are discovered) by turning to the neighbour river—

The Moselle—an excursion up which river now follows. Our destination is Eltz Castle, one of the most charming spots in nature.

Before starting, I may mention an incident in connection with our hiring a carriage. We had mentioned our intention to our Coblenz friends, and they were kind enough to give us the name of the party they generally employed

when they required to hire, and we were informed that the charge would be so much. On finding the man's place of business we asked his terms, and he asked two thalers more than our friend had mentioned. We remonstrated, and showed him our friend's card, saying that we had been recommended by him, and he had named the proper charge to us. "Ah!" replied our host, "that is quite right; that is what I should charge him, because he may employ me again, and he is a townsman; but you are strangers, and therefore I charge you more accordingly." Our friend's introduction, therefore, availed us nothing, and, a little irritated, we went to try another party, found his charge higher, and left the matter over till next morning.

This is the only instance of rebellion on my part to the grand secret of pleasant travelling—*pay*. If you travel you must pay; it is only kicking against the pricks to resist in the least, and will probably end in taking more out of you, and vexation to the bargain. Make your arrangements carefully, and do not pay till you are asked, but pay what is asked without a grudge. In many cases, if you are paying well one party, he takes care of you from others, and he takes pains for your comfort in ways you never dream of. The parsimonious victim of "a bargain" finds his pleasure strangled at every move.

The consequence of our little resistance in this instance, was that we had to hire next morning, got the worst carriage, a nasty, disagreeable driver, and started late. Once started, we regained our equanimity very speedily, as the air was cool and sweet, and the sun shining brightly, but not with a glowing heat—a charming day, in fact.

Our way was along the banks of the Moselle, which winds and twists in an eccentric manner. The banks are pretty, and wooded; well cultivated fields are numerous;

but nobody is to be seen, and the country has a deserted look.

We cross the river at a ferry after a drive of some six or seven miles, then drive slowly up the hills on to a village called Neidermaifeld, where we order dinner at the inn for five o'clock, and then turn to the left to our destination. A half hour's more driving brings us to Eltz Castle; we descend a steep, rugged road on foot, leaving the carriage in a small wood. Then bursts upon our view one of the loveliest spots Creation ever produced.

We are still high up, on a vast plateau undulating into hills, with forests here and there; but we have to look straight down to see Eltz Castle, which is in a deep, circular hollow or bowl. In the middle of the bowl stands a bold strong rock, and on the rock is the castle. Round and round it runs a gurgling stream, and every side of the punch-bowl is clothed with shaggy trees and pretty underwood, while what may be called the bottom of the bowl, outside of the stream and the rock, is of the greenest turf, and in this, too, are the gardens of the castle, to add the charm of colour.

The chateau itself is a very tall irregular building, with turrets and dovecots and gables innumerable, curiously-slanted roofs at all angles, spires and weathercocks glancing in the sun, and old towers crowned with flowering lilac trees. These old towers and these old roofs have kept each other in company for 1,200 years, the castle having been built in the year 600, and it is almost the only instance of this among all the innumerable old castles of Germany. This, I suppose, is entirely owing to the fact that it is so concealed by its marvellous situation. It is quite unique.

After due contemplation from above it, we descend the steep slope, and bye-and-bye reach the door of the castle,

pass over a drawbridge which spans the stream, and enter a vaultlike gate. We observe that the flooring is just the original rock in all its rough uncouthness. No attempt has been made by the rude builders of old to smooth it, and nothing has since been done, except what has been worn by the feet of generations which have here successively made their entrances and their exits and are gone.

We politely request to see the interior, and are gruffly refused, and informed that the proprietor, Count Eltz, has forbidden it to be shown to visitors, and, further, that he has advertised so in the papers. This disappoints us much, and we make a half retreat, but turn and try again. They agree to show us one room. Shown this, and expressing much interest, we are shown another, and having thus far got in the thin end of the wedge, we are shown it all.

Here remain the weapons, the dishes, the pictures, the tapestry, the boots, the knives, the pistols, the guns, the wee rusty cannons, and the stone balls that were fired from them of olden times. Hunting horns and tin bugles of rudest construction, old bows and old quivers full of old arrows, steel bows, yew bows, ivory inlaid bows, little tables with cushioned tops for ladies, dishes, flagons, fire-irons, wondrous in the look, speaking of such times! Verily we fare better than counts did then. The big fireplaces, and long oaken tables, family portraits on the walls, high beds with a ladder by which to get into them. This latter a necessary precaution, perhaps, to avoid assassination. There is a genealogical tree of which the first count and countess form the roots, and all their successors are growing out of their bodies till the tree reaches a goodly spread.

No two rooms follow in succession, all are entered and left in some hole and corner fashion, so that the

old Eltz counts might have a capital chance to play at hide and seek for life if an enemy got inside, in spite of them.

We enter a little turret-room with windows looking three ways, where the sentinel stood of old; but a hive of bees has possession of it now, and fills the little apartment with buzz and life.

Windows cut with diamond panes, and lookouts on the loveliest verdure; and down into the singing brook below, or up to the wooded height, which looked from above like the sides of the bowl, but now appear like hills hemming us all round. I am bad at description, but were I ever so good I could convey but a feeble idea of my impressions of this lovely place.

Well, we are away at last, and I find we have spent two hours where I thought we had passed but a few minutes.

Another castle, dismantled, and of a heavy, square look, but fast going to ruin, stands on a rock which commands the Castle of Eltz, or, in other words, it is built on the rim of the bowl, and when we come up again out of the little, round valley, we take a look at this one. It was built by an enemy of the Counts of Eltz, the Archbishop of Treves, who by means of it cut off their supplies, and after years of fighting reduced them to vassalage to him. Now time has left the old one as it was, and the one built to destroy it is a ruin, and for miles round none can dispute the Counts of Eltz.

I have now come to nearly the end of my excursions, and before concluding ought to refer to

Ehrenbreitstein, the grand fortress of Prussia, and principal bulwark against invasion from the French. The best time to "do" this is early in the morning, the earlier the better, but not later than six o'clock A.M.

I got up at 4.30, walked from Laubbach to Coblenz, met a party of German and English friends there by appointment; and the party, including a handsome lieutenant in the Prussian cavalry, who was to be our chaperon over the fort, started quite merrily in the cool morning air. We mount higher and higher till we stand on the very topmost pinnacle, whence floats the great flag of Prussia.

The view from this standpoint is considered very fine, but I was not greatly impressed with it after the superior attractions of the Neiderwald, &c., and the scenes I had lately roamed among.

The fort itself, except in its size, is nothing very different from other forts; but its size and strength are enormous, and looking down we see, far below, men like ants busy moving with little toy barrows, tumbling little drops of earth, and making lots of little ant hills; these are the new "shore defences" on the banks of the river, inside of which a new railway is to run, *and the new railway company are to pay for them.* Thus a paternal government makes its bargains.

Coming down we had a look at the occupants of the fort, and their accommodation, my opinion of which I offer under the following heads:—

The Soldier's Rooms—stinking vaults, with one bed above another, and awfully coarse sheets, &c.; yet some in such a place are studiously teaching themselves to read or write!

The Soldier's Bread—brown as nuts, very coarse, oval loaves, a composition of rye and bran.

The Soldiers themselves—a sturdy, undersized lot of fellows, that look as if they had a deal of work in them, but little *esprit*.

The Officers—as fine a lot of fellows as ever I saw, and

among them some really magnificent specimens of the genus "man."

They are very obliging, intelligent, and well educated, and seem to be on extremely good terms with each other.

Their uniforms are all useful and simple, but well cut, and mostly, if not all, of blue cloth.

A long row of cannons. I think them very good fresh pieces. I am told they are useless, and have just been sold as old iron at 3s. per cwt., to be replaced by new cannon of the most improved breechloading sort.

Everything here speaks of an anxiety to be ready for business; nothing but the best in weapons has a chance. Besides, I had witnessed in my morning walk the construction, on the neighbouring plains, of immense quantities of fascines and gabions, the piling of large quantities of thick stobs for stockades, the digging of rifle-pits, plenty of ball practice at targets, &c., all indicating a spirit of preparation for any eventuality.

After seeing everything we breakfasted about 8 o'clock in one of the adjoining gardens, in the open air, and I enjoy this very much. The breakfast supplied consists of the inevitable sour milch, sweet milk, bread, bread crumbs, ground cinnamon, eggs hard-boiled and soft-boiled, coffee. We eat it at a round table under the trees, with an appetite sharpened by our early start, and pleasant, lively chatter.

I might have elaborated this work with many little anecdotes and incidents which were interesting to me, but every one will pick up a crop of such for himself or herself, and my object will be served if I have indicated the locality with sufficient distinctness to attract others thither.

Well, how to get there.

Sailing up the Rhine is a very tedious process, on account of the rapid current which has to be stemmed. It will be

best to sail down in coming home, and therefore from any part of this country, start from London, say London to Brussels, where stay a day or so to break the journey and see the field of Waterloo, &c.

From Brussels to Cologne, where stay one day to see the cathedral.

From Cologne to Coblenz, and hire at any of the hotels a machine to drive to Laubbach.

This is a very agreeable trip, and with the exception, of course, of crossing the Channel, it is all done by rail.

In coming home—Take the steamer from Coblenz down the Rhine to Rotterdam, where leave your luggage at any good hotel and take a day or two days to run through to the Hague, thence to Amsterdam, thence to Utrecht, and back thence to Rotterdam. You will thus get a view of Holland, which, though not of long duration, will be quite satisfactory.

From Rotterdam take the steamer home to Leith if bound for Scotland, and London or Hull if for England.

Coming home will not cost half what going did, and it adds interest by the variety. Sailing down the Rhine is quick and pleasant steaming.

I need say little about the fares in this country or to Coblenz—these can be ascertained from the railway tables. The fare from Coblenz to Rotterdam in the steamer is 12s. 8d.; from Rotterdam to Hague, 1s. 8d.; Hague to Amsterdam, 4s. 8d.; Amsterdam to Rotterdam, by way of Utrecht, 6s. 6d.

Fare in screw steamer from Rotterdam to Leith, 30s. The passage is 36 to 43 hours, and the breakfasts, dinners, &c., supplied, very good.

The Best Time to go.—The end of April is early enough, as the weather only then begins to assume a genial character. May and June are delightful months, July and August are

very warm, and September and October cooler, with the full bloom and glow of verdure and vintage.

The "season" at the baths begins in June, and includes July and August, and during these months the excellent military bands of the regiments quartered in Coblenz give frequent musical performances of a high-class character in the grounds; balls and fetes are organized; and everything is done to render the sojourn of the visitors agreeable.

APPENDIX.

ABBREVIATED TRANSLATION OF THE PROSPECTUS.

This Establishment has now been open for thirty-six years, and its wide-spread favourable reputation, together with the steady increase in the number of patients yearly, prove sufficiently that it is in the possession of all the requirements necessary to fulfil its purpose.

The medical management principally accounts for this; but it is also to a great extent due to the consistency and purity of the waters and of the air, to the situation, the internal arrangements, and the food and attendance.

As a rule, the principles adopted many years ago are adhered to, but are from time to time modified in conformity with the advances made of science.

The drinking and bathing water of the Establishment is derived from a well, famed in ancient times under the name of "Fons-carus," and which springs from the lowest strata of the oldest formations, maintaining a natural warmth of 8 degrees Reaumur under all the variations of the atmosphere.

Chemical analysis proves this water to be perfectly free from all ingredients detrimental to health, without colour, taste, or smell,

and the experience of thousands proves that even the weakest organs of digestion may assimilate it.

The remarkable purity of the air may be specially pointed out, as commendable in the surroundings of Laubbach, and even in a hot summer a certain medium of temperature is maintained, owing to the proximity of mountains thickly covered with woods.

The arrangements of the baths, sleeping apartments, and public rooms should satisfy the most fastidious, since rooms may be selected looking either east, west, north, or south; a single one may be had, or two or three communicating with each other.

The bathing apartments have been built under medical instructions, and are in every respect suited to their purpose. They have been recently enlarged, so that hot baths are now also to be had.